



OCTOBER 2008

Helping Organizations Retain Their Most Valuable Asset

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Winter Holiday Safety Tips for Pets

- "People" Food: Table scraps, especially covered in gravy or containing poultry skin can cause severe gastrointestinal upset. Do not give any poultry bones to your pets, as they can splinter, form sharp points and get stuck in the throat, gums, or the roof of the mouth. Onions and chocolate are also toxic to pets when ingested in large doses.
- Houseguests: During the holidays, pets may not understand why their usually quiet home is now full of chaos. Providing pets a quiet place to retreat, where they can venture out to visit, will help put them at ease. Watch pets when doors are opening and closing as they can easily slip out in the commotion.
- Electrical Cords: Twinkling lights mean extra cords and tempting "chew toys." Taking time to tape down or cover cords will help prevent shocks, burns or more serious injuries.
- Artificial Trees: Anchoring the top of the tree to the ceiling with a strong cord helps keep it in place around frolicking pets. Cats may eat tinsel hanging from trees; this can cause intestinal obstruction, so keep tinsel decorations high on the tree.
- Mistletoe, Berries, and Other Treats: Mistletoe, holly berries, and poinsettia plants, can be poisonous to pets, while pine needles can puncture a pet's intestine! The use of pet repellent sprays helps keep them away from areas and objects that may cause harm.

Source: The University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine website: <http://www.vet.upenn.edu>

Bad moods are an inevitable part of life. What can be particularly frustrating, however, is when we know we're in a bad mood, but seem unable to snap ourselves out of it. Are you aware of the many short-term and long-term, healthy techniques and strategies you can utilize to improve your mood?

If you find yourself feeling down, anxious, grumpy, low in energy, irritable and quick to snap at family, friends or coworkers, try a few of the suggestions below and find what works best for you:

1. Practice deep breathing: Break the grip of a bad mood with controlled, slow and deep breathing. Here's what to do: Sit comfortably at your desk or alone in a quiet room. Close your eyes and inhale slowly and deeply through your nose (for approx. 7 seconds), then exhale slowly through your mouth (for approx. 8 seconds). Focus your attention entirely on your breathing. If you prefer, say (or think the word) "relax" or "calm" or another soothing word as you exhale. Do this for ten repetitions any time you feel particularly anxious or stressed. This technique, known as the "relaxation response," will calm your brain, relax your body and lift your mood.

2. Exercise: When you exercise, your brain releases endorphins, adrenaline, serotonin and dopamine – natural brain chemicals that work together to relieve tension, lift your energy and boost your mood. Researchers report that even a short brisk walk can give you an energy and mood boost. What types of exercise are best? Cardiovascular exercise (such as brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming or other aerobic activity), weight training and yoga have all been shown in studies to reduce tension and anxiety and improve your emotional state.

3. Adjust your diet: When you eat and what you eat affects your blood sugar levels, which in turn affect your energy and mood. Nutritionists recommend the following to help stabilize your blood sugar levels and mood:

- 1 Eat small meals and snacks every few hours to avoid peaks and valleys in your blood sugar levels. Eating consistently throughout the day provides your brain with a constant source of fuel to help stabilize your energy and mood.
- 1 Limit consumption of simple sugars and refined carbohydrates to lessen major blood sugar swings. Concentrated sources of sugar like soda, candy,

Healthy Ways To Improve Your Mood



fruit juice, jam and syrup can create radical spikes (and drops) in your blood sugar levels, which can leave you feeling irritable and tired. Additionally, refined white starch foods like white bread, crackers, bagels, muffins, breakfast cereals and white rice can have the same effect on your blood sugar and mood. Limit your consumption of these foods. Instead include more complex carbohydrates in your diet, such as vegetables, fruit, beans, peas, lentils, whole grains, brown rice and oatmeal.

1 Include protein with meals and snacks. The addition of protein to a meal or snack will help slow the absorption of carbohydrate in the blood and lessen blood sugar and mood swings. Good protein sources include chicken, turkey, seafood and fish, veal, pork tenderloin, tofu, eggs and low-fat yogurt.

1 Cut down on caffeine. Although it can provide an initial boost in energy and concentration, too much caffeine is linked to depression, fatigue and mood swings.

4. Let it out. If you're in a bad mood, there could be an obvious problem or emotional reason for it. Try to determine why you're in a bad mood and talk to a family member, friend or counselor about it. Simply talking about your problem will help you start to feel better. Allow yourself to feel your emotions. Remember, bottling up your feelings will only darken your mood, so let your feelings out.

5. Make adequate sleep a priority. Scientists have

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documented the link between sleep deprivation and a poor mood. According to a survey conducted by the National Sleep Foundation, those who got fewer than six hours of sleep on weekdays were more likely to describe themselves as stressed, sad, angry and pessimistic. Conversely, those getting adequate sleep reported more positive feelings. For a better mood, make the quality and quantity of your sleep a priority. Research suggests that most healthy adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Keep a consistent sleep and wake schedule on workdays and weekends.

Choose relaxing activities before bedtime, such as reading or taking a warm shower or bath, instead of tuning on the TV or computer. Make sure your sleeping environment promotes relaxation and sleep. Your bedroom should be quiet, dark and at the proper temperature (in the mid-60s).

6. Bask in the sun. Sunlight is another element that is associated with mood and health. About 20% of Americans report feeling more depressed during the winter, when the amount of sunlight during the day is less and foul weather keeps people indoors more often. Why does this happen?

When you're out in the sun your serotonin levels go up. Serotonin is a hormone in our body that helps elevate our mood. In the winter, we don't get as much sunlight, so we don't produce as much serotonin. As a result, more people feel blue. Try to get out more during daylight hours to

Adequate Sleep Enhances Memory, Learning and Job Performance

In a recent study, adults who were allowed just five hours of sleep a night for a week continuously scored poorly on tests. Only after they slept eight hours for two nights in a row did their test scores improve. Researchers say by cutting your sleep short, you miss out on REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which helps consolidate information and enhance memory.

Additionally, a survey conducted by the Better Sleep Council reports that "sleep deprivation" impacts alertness at work, productivity and your ability to socially interact with co-workers." The bottom line: Quality sleep is vital to your health, happiness and productivity. According to the latest research, the human body still needs 7-8 hours of sleep per night (the recommended average for adults).

Tips for healthy sleep

To improve the quality of your nightly sleep, the National Sleep Foundation recommends the following:

1. Schedule time for sleep. Just like we manage our many 'to-dos', sleep is an appointment that you can not miss. When the quality of your sleep improves, so does your mood, thus the quality of your life. Tonight's sleep can determine how your tomorrow will be, so it should be top on any daily agenda.
2. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine and create a sleep sanctuary. Wind down before bed. Take a bath, meditate, do whatever you need to do to relax and wipe away the day's stress. If you find your mind racing while trying to sleep, keep a pad of paper next to your bed and jot down what's on your mind. Make sure your bedroom is dark, cool and quiet and that your pillows, sleep surface and coverings provide you with comfort.
3. Exercise regularly, but finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.
4. Avoid foods and drinks high in caffeine (coffee, colas, tea and chocolate) and alcohol a few hours before bedtime. Caffeine and alcohol disturb sleep. Nicotine may make it difficult to fall asleep and lead to fragmented sleep; those who smoke should get help to quit.

HMS is here to help

If sleep is a problem for you or one of your dependents, contact Human Management Services (HMS) for CONFIDENTIAL counseling, referrals or information. A professional HMS counselor can help you assess your situation, help you devise a plan of action, and/or refer you to the most appropriate treatment provider. If you need help, why not call an HMS counselor today? We're here to help you.

NOTE: If you suffer from chronic or severe insomnia, visit your doctor or a sleep disorders clinic to see if there is an underlying medical condition.

help break a bad mood. An early morning or lunchtime walk will increase your exposure to natural sunlight, release the brain's natural mood-lifting chemicals like endorphins, and includes the additional benefit of being outside and breathing fresh air.

7. Eliminate the worry habit. If you're stuck in "worry mode," changes take place in your physiology (changes in blood chemistry, blood sugar level, blood pressure, muscle tension) that undermine your energy and mood. If you're prone to worry, ask yourself these questions: Will any amount of worrying change the future? Will worrying pay your bills, prevent an accident, make your job more secure, or show that you care more because you worry? The truth is you can spend the rest of your life worrying and you will not have changed a thing. Worrying is passive. It gets you nowhere. The first step to eliminating worry is to recognize it as a bad habit (a learned, negative way of thinking) that can be changed. To eliminate worry, try the following: The next time you catch yourself worrying, change your "worry" to "wonder." Your internal dialogue could go something like this: "I wonder how I can overcome this obstacle? Maybe I could try this. If it doesn't work, I'll try something else." By changing worry to wonder, you turn unproductive, stress-promoting thinking into thought and action that can create positive change in your life. If persistent worry is a problem for you, seek out additional resources or counseling to help you overcome this destructive habit.

8. Take a break. Give yourself a break from negative thinking or a bad mood by doing something different. Suggestions that might work for you: Take a warm bath, read a good book, listen to relaxing music, get a massage, engage in a hobby, work in your garden, watch your favorite comedy or visit a library or museum. A change of pace, no matter how short, can help give you a more objective or positive perspective on what may be souring your mood.

HMS is here to help

Everyone experiences a bad mood from time to time. However, if you or a loved one feels "down" for weeks, it may be a medical condition known as depression. HMS' confidential counselors are specially trained to help people get the right kind of help for depression. We're here to help you. Call us today.

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